4: Bowen C-5 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

501 a headdress—serve as his bedding. The Arab has not been spoiled by soft mattresses and can get a good night's rest on a floor, deck, or hard ground. The *nakhoda*, the mate, and a few selected passengers live on the poop. Sometimes an awning is spread over the poop to keep the burning sun out, and other times it is bare; sometimes a Persian rug is spread on the poop. There is invariably a cabin beneath the poop for the storage of valuable cargo and ship's stores (see Plate 22—top). This cabin is usually only the space between the continuation of the main deck and the poop deck. Sometimes there are doors leading forward, but more often it is simply open.

As there is no below on a dhow, there are quite naturally no toilets below. Dhows do carry toilets, however, in the form of one-holed privies, hung overboard off the poop (see Plate 21—bottom). They are usually on the port side, but are sometimes seen on the starboard; I once saw a large *sambuk* in Aden with two, one to port and one to starboard. These lack the privacy of a privy, and are almost completely open. Freya Stark[82] had to have the captain rig up a special awning for her when she traveled down the South Arabian coast in a dhow.

When the dhows carry passengers they are packed on the main deck like cattle. Living conditions are not too bad without passengers, but with a load of passengers, conditions immediately become foul. Ordinarily the bilge on a dhow is beyond description, but sanitary conditions become unimaginable with a load of passengers who are so packed in that they cannot all hang over the rail in rough weather. Villiers[83] tells of seeing a small 60-foot *bhum* from Oman sailing down the coast of Africa with about two hundred Omani passengers; it was estimated by the Arabs on Villiers' ship that ten of these would die before reaching Zanzibar. Whenever there is a death aboard, the Arabs conduct a hasty sea burial; deaths are never reported to port authorities by the Arabs, for fear of not being cleared.

[704]

805 Although the Arab aboard ship has little concept of time as far as days go, he divides the day into four periods separated by the announcement
•788 of the five daily prayers in which all good Moslems religiously indulge. Prayer time is announced by the *muezzin* (prayer caller), who may be any one of the crew or officers. The *muezzin* simply announces the time of prayer, and bears no similarity to a priest or minister, for the Moslems have none of these; their religion is voluntary. The first sound to fall on Arab ears every day is the raucous call of the *muezzin* perched on some

[82] F. Stark, *A Winter in Arabia* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1940), p. 314.
[83] A. Villiers, 55, p. 124.

4: Bowen C-5 (1960) 1961 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

point of vantage. Before every prayer the Arabs first perform the required Moslem ablutions of washing their hands, face, feet, etc., in sea water; then they go through the prayer ritual facing towards Mecca with their headcloth spread in front of them as a prayer rug. It is for determining the direction of Mecca that the compass on a large dhow is often most used! The first prayer is the dawn prayer said in the first greying light of dawn; the morning prayer takes place when the sun is close to the meridian; the afternoon prayer is called when the shadows begin to lengthen; the evening prayer is said shortly after the sun sets; finally, the night prayer ends the day several hours after sunset. The above applies to Moslem Persians and Indians as well as to the Arabs; obviously it does not apply to Hindus or sailors of other religions.

Eating is intimately related to Islamic religion for Arabs and other Moslem sailors, as their three meals come directly after the dawn, the morning, and the evening prayers. In the month of Ramadhan all faithful Moslems neither drink nor eat during the daylight hours; however, during Ramadhan all activities on land and on sea usually hit a low ebb. In other months breakfast consists for the Arabs of little more than a piece of unleavened bread with some sweet tea or water with which to wash it down. Lunch has more to offer, consisting of a mess of boiled rice with a flavoring of *ghee* (clarified butter) and curried or baked fish (if the ship has any fish aboard). The main portion of the meal is rice, which is served on a huge tray, or often simply on a palm leaf mat. The crew gathers around several of these trays or mats and makes quick work of the food, using no implements other than their right hand. They take a little fish (or meat if they are that fortunate), ball a small handful of rice around it and toss the ball deftly into their mouth, usually without losing a crumb. Nothing is ever wasted, as someone always scavenges the last morsel. Supper is essentially the same as lunch.

Often a feast is in order in port; this always calls for the slaughter of a sheep (or goat), a number of which are always kept alive on board. The sheep is usually slaughtered at dawn and is virtually dragged from its skin into a large iron pot, where it is boiled in water. The sheep or goat is the *pièce de résistance* and is served whole on a huge tray of rice. For a feast, a curry flavoring or raisins are often mixed with the rice. Various delicacies from the sheep, such as the heart, liver, lungs, and kidneys, are cooked separately and served in side dishes. As the feast starts, the sheep is methodically torn apart limb from limb and fiber by fiber. The meat is always eaten in the same manner: rice is balled around small bits of meat and tossed deftly into one's mouth with the right hand. In pulling